

District of New York, to formally honor Rochester General Hospital of Rochester, New York, for having achieved excellence in the area of heart care, as an integrated source for patient cardiovascular needs, from prevention and education to diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE HOUSTON  
AREA NETWORK ONLINE COMMU-  
NITY (HAN-NET)

**HON. CHRIS BELL**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 4, 2003*

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor The Houston Area Network Online Community (HAN-NET), a forum for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists and others committed to the cause of equality and civil rights for all. HAN-NET has been in operation since November 1998 and is ceasing operations on November 1, 2003.

Throughout its existence and operation, HAN-NET has informed, challenged and inspired the Houston GLBT community and has been extremely successful in accomplishing its mission to simplify and accelerate communication within the Houston GLBT community.

HAN-NET, a Yahoo groups "listserv," has enhanced GLBT community communication through its online announcements, news, and dialogue. HAN-NET has made pertinent information immediately accessible to its members. Information reached members directly and was packaged for quick redistribution.

The HAN-NET online community participated in several collaborative efforts including establishing community priorities and activist goals for the Houston GLBT community. I strongly support these goals which include: focusing on local and state political issues impacting the GLBT community; finding a new home and permanent funding for the Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center; finding permanent funding for the operation and growth of the Gulf Coast Archives and Museum; building a strong corporate network group; supporting HIV education and prevention; and establishing an educational outreach program for the transgender community.

It is my sincere hope that the success of HAN-NET will inspire other community leaders to continue and grow the mission of its founders.

I know my colleagues join me in congratulating HAN-NET moderator Brandon J. Wolf and the HAN-NET online community for a job well done for Houston's GLBT community. Mr. Wolf's commitment to improved communication and outreach for the past five years has been inspiring and extremely worthwhile. I wish him great success in his continued work for the GLBT community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 4, 2003*

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber on Octo-

ber 29, 2003. I would like the record to show that had I been present in this Chamber, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall votes 574 and 575. I also would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 576, 577, 578 and 579.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILI-  
TIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT  
ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. JOEL HEFLEY**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 29, 2003*

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1720, the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act, a two-year authorization bill that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out major medical facility construction projects to improve, renovate, replace, update or establish patient care facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In addition to authorizing \$168 million for fiscal year 2004 and \$600 million for fiscal year 2005 for construction of undesignated major projects, H.R. 1720 also authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a major medical facility project at the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center site in Aurora, Colorado. H.R. 1720 would authorize this project to be carried out using a total appropriation of \$300 million.

Mr. Speaker, since the end of World War II, the Veterans Medical Center in Denver and the University of Colorado hospitals have shared expensive and specialized medical equipment and facilities, such as surgical suites and imaging equipment. This partnership has also included the sharing of expensive specialty diagnostics and medical treatments.

Due to the lack of space, inability to renovate or construct newer facilities and the cost associated with continuing to use the site, the University of Colorado Hospital moved its campus in 1995 to the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center. This site is four and one half times the size of the existing campus and provides the school with a new medical complex for the 21st century.

As the University completes its move to Fitzsimons, a state of the art medical campus will be developed and many of the very best services in the United States will be available. For example, the Anschutz Cancer Pavilion, which is already open, is among the best institutions in the nation for all types of cancer treatment and research. In addition, the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is well known throughout the country for its organ transplant programs.

While the move to the Fitzsimons site solved existing problems and provided future advantages for the University of Colorado Hospital, it unfortunately separated the Denver Veterans Medical Center from both the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and the University of Colorado Hospital by eight miles. While the University of Colorado Hospital and the Veterans Medical Center continue to share medical resources, this eight mile separation creates a very real and significant barrier to quality care for veterans who receive their care at the Denver Veterans Medical Center.

Compounding this problem, a recent study commissioned by the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19 indicated that high demand for medical services by veterans at the Denver Veterans Medical Center will continue unabated for the next 20 years. The cost of maintaining the current Denver Veterans Medical Center to satisfy minimal accreditation levels until 2020 has been estimated to be \$233 million, and estimates to rebuild the facility in 2020 are \$377 million in today's dollars.

Planning studies have shown that a move of the Denver Veterans Medical Center to the Fitzsimons campus is the most cost effective of the reasonably acceptable alternatives. Passage of H.R. 1720 will allow the Denver Veterans Medical Center to relocate to the Fitzsimons site and enjoy many of the same opportunities as the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center enjoys now. This will include, but is not limited to, solving aging facilities issues, capping new facilities cost, enhancing quality of medical care, increasing flexibility and reducing operational costs.

Veterans who have highly specialized medical needs must have easy access to the best diagnostic and treatment programs that America provides. In a medical school environment doctors tend to be better informed of the latest treatment procedures and protocols. They are closer to the "cutting edge" of modern medicine. Quality of medical care for veterans is enhanced in a medical school teaching hospital.

University physicians in specialty residency programs provide a significant amount of care in the Denver Veterans Medical Center. To date some 90 percent of the physicians that work at the VA Medical Center also work at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and most VA doctors have faculty appointments in the Medical School. Co-locating the University of Colorado Hospital with the Denver Veterans Medical Center will allow University doctors to continue their close relationship in treating veterans. Not allowing the Denver Veterans Medical Center to move to the Fitzsimons campus is simply unacceptable and it would not be in the best interest of high quality patient care veterans deserve to abandon this partnership of over fifty years.

The new VA Medical Center at Fitzsimons site will be veteran-friendly and will provide a practicable alternative to the Denver Veterans Medical Center remaining at its current, outdated facility. The new Veterans Medical Center at Fitzsimons will be a free-standing ambulatory and inpatient care federal tower building for veterans, clearly identified as the Veterans Administration Medical Center with its own nearby parking. New veterans research facilities will be constructed and there will be a new veterans long-term care unit located next to the new 180-bed State veterans nursing home currently being constructed at the site.

This project has another group of potential beneficiaries, as well. The Department of Defense will likely construct a military treatment facility to meet the needs of Buckley Air Force Base. One attractive solution will be to meet the Buckley Air Force Base's military treatment facility requirements by participating in joint construction of a joint Denver Veterans Medical Center and a Department of Defense facility at Fitzsimons. The Air Force, as well as the Department of Defense, find this partnership to be in its long term interest. For this reason, the House-passed Fiscal Year 2004